

DRAYTON VALLEY CROSS-COUNTRY SKI AREA

The Essentials

Name of Area	Pembina Nordic Trails, Drayton Valley
Location	150 km south west of Edmonton
Km trails	15 km
Km classic	15 km
Km skate	15 km
Trail Rating	Easy to intermediate
Signage	Poor
Grooming	Good to very good. Usually done over weekends.
Facilities	Cozy ski chalet at with wood fire & outside washrooms
Trail Fees	None
Access Points	From ski chalet. If gate to access road locked can park on secondary road in two spots, where trails come next to road.
Other facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails managed by Pembina Nordic Club • Ski chalet usually open over weekends when trails are used by local skiers. When someone has lit the wood stove, it is a good spot to take a lunch break
Loppet	None
Description of trails	<p>All trails are set with a classic track & a skating lane. They undulate through aspen & birch forest along the side of the N Saskatchewan River. To the west, there is an easy 4km trail called the Ridge Loop, which is ideal for beginners. However, there is a section of about 1km above & along the top of the river valley, which is a bit narrow for skating. Off this loop is a 1.5km advanced side loop that descends a steep windy hill. This trail can easily be bypassed & should be avoided by beginners or when icy.</p> <p>The trails to the north & east traverse more undulating terrain & are great for some intermediate classic or skate skiing. There is a perimeter trail with a series of shortcuts and side loops. There are a few steeper sections but the trails are wide enough for all but the very novice skier to negotiate.</p>
Trail map	Can print off web-site
Website	pembinanordic.org
Trail conditions & more information	Nthn Alberta ski area report linked to ENSC website
Directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proceed west from Edmonton on Hwy 16 for about 100km. • Turn south onto Hwy 22 near Enthwhistle • After about 50km turn left (east) onto Range Rd 494 just north of Drayton Valley, (at the south end of the DV golf course). • Continue east on RR 494 for 5km. Note after 3km it becomes a gravel road. • Turn right opposite the County gravel pit & drive into the chalet parking lot. • If you miss the 494 turn off & end up in DV, just turn around @ Boston Pizza, head north on 22, & you will find RR 494 about 1 mile north of BP's (it's the first right after BP's). • Travelling time is about 1hr 30m from centre of city. • Note: Those people living in the far south of Edmonton may prefer to get there by going south on Hwy 2 to Leduc then heading west to Drayton Valley & turn north onto Hwy 22 to reach RR 494.

Mike's Two Skis Worth

This is another one of those hidden gems of ski areas that I only discovered a few years ago after seeing a notice in one of Edmonton's ski shops. The trails are rarely busy and looked after by a small but very friendly bunch of dedicated local skiers. Grooming is done regularly throughout the season as conditions dictate and usually they are well prepared for the weekends.

The ski chalet is much more hospitable than the bare bone shelters out at Blackfoot and with the woodstove going, it's a nice cozy spot to take a break. One drawback is that the trail system is currently not very well signed and it can be quite confusing especially on the west side trails.

If I want a nice easy warm up skate, I take the Ridge Loop on the west side of the chalet. I normally bypass the steep West Hill Loop if the conditions are slick or icy. The trail back above the river has some lovely views across the Pembina Valley. For a more energetic ski I go out on the Evergreen & North Loop trails, either direction is good. For novice skiers there are also a couple of short easy loops close to the chalet.

I have found it useful before going to contact committee members of Pembina Nordic for an update on current conditions & grooming. The contact numbers can be accessed via their website. On occasions particularly, if a group of us are going out some member has made sure the access gate is unlocked and the fire going in the chalet. This definitely warrants a small donation to their club coffers.

Further along the same side of the Valley is a small downhill ski area and I understand that there are plans to link the areas up with a cross-country trail also to link up with some ski trails nearer the town.